

COUNTRY China. (Sinkiang)

SUBJECT The Tadjik Race of Sinkiang

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1. Number in Sinkiang: The Tadjik race of Sinkiang is also referred to, both in Sinkiang and in English-language texts on that province, as Tajik, T'a-chi-k'o, Sarikolis, Sarikoullis and Iranian. According to a 1941 survey they numbered 8,867, or slightly less than .24% of the total population of Sinkiang. In the last century the Tadjik population has declined, in part because of slave-hunting raids conducted by peoples from northern India before and after the time of Yakub Beg (1800-1875).
2. History of the Race: The Tadjiks are said to be Aryan descendants of the pre-historic, indigenous, peoples who once inhabited Iran and southwestern Central Asia. They were the early inhabitants of Khotan (Hotien) who left documents dating back to the Han Dynasty (202-618) in the Saka language, a now extinct Indo-Iranian tongue. In these documents they are spoken of as one of the eight tribes of the Karakoram. T'ang Dynasty (618-907) records likewise describe the Tadjiks as identical in external appearance and language with the inhabitants of Khotan. At that time the Chinese first conquered the region and established there a military post which marked the extreme point of Chinese military occupation in Central Asia. The Tadjiks, however, were not brought under the control of China until the time of Jenghis Khan, that is, in the Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368). After the great westward spread of the empire had ceased and the tide of invasion had receded, the Tadjiks regained their independence. They caused no trouble and dwelt in perfect harmony with China, controlling the trade-route to India which had been an important highway of commerce ever since the time of the T'ang Dynasty. Throughout the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) they were regarded as allies and good neighbors and though since that time they have

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been involved in the general unrest of the frontier district, the Tadjiks were never considered as hostile elements like the Kirghiz, whom in their way of living they resemble. They have decreased in numbers, lost their ancient power and are now concentrated in a small area of Sinkiang.

3. Language: The Tadjiks do not speak Turkic, as do the other Alpine races of Sinkiang, they speak the Iranian language.

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4. Religion: During the T'ang Dynasty the Tadjiks were devout adherents of Buddhism, subsequently they were converted to Islam. They now adhere to the Islamic sect of the Moslem faith which acknowledges the Agha Khan in Bombay as its head.

5. Physical Characteristics: Tadjiks are said to be the most representative of the Alpine type, nearly pure specimen of the so-called "homo alpinus". They are a sturdy people whose blood is probably the purest of all of the races found in Sinkiang, their women are certainly among the most beautiful.

6. Concentrations: The Tadjik race of Sinkiang is only found in the extreme southwest corner of Sinkiang. They are concentrated in the Sarikol or Tash Qurghan Valley, where they form the majority of the population and appear, in small numbers, in a few secluded adjoining mountain regions of the Pamirs. The only other peoples inhabiting this area are the Kirghiz. The Tash Qurghan Valley is a mountainous district nowhere less than ten thousand feet above sea-level and lies close to the point where the Chinese, Soviet and Afghan frontiers meet.

7. Occupations: The Tadjiks are a sedentary people who build their homes in the most inaccessible mountain regions and who live for the most part as cultivators, despite the fact that the Tash Qurghan Valley is ten thousand feet above sea-level. Irrigation is practiced and the main crops are oats, barley and legumes. Despite difficult conditions, the land is apparently capable of supporting a larger population than it does at present.

8. Summary: At present the settled population lives in close contact with the pastoral Kirghiz, the relations between the two groups appear to be friendly. On the other hand, the relations of the Tash Qurghan population with the Chinese administration have deteriorated in recent years. The Tadjiks are resentful of Chinese rule because of the burdens imposed on them for supplying men and animals, without pay or for insufficient pay, to keep open a high mountain route between Sinkiang and India, which is used by official travellers and to a smaller extent by traders. This discontentment might take the form of an attempt to break away from Chinese rule, but if so, it is not clear what other people they would prefer to join. The Tadjiks are a sturdy and ancient people, worthy of trust and whose rights should be respected in any pacification of the border regions.

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